



CITY OF HOUSTON
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)
DIGITAL EQUITY SERVICES
SOLICITATION NO. P03-Q31129

Date Issued:	December 17, 2021
Solicitation Questions Deadline:	January 7, 2022
Submission Due Date	January 31, 2022
Solicitation Contact Person:	Ruby Lopez Ruby.lopez@houstontx.gov 832.393.8705

Project Description: The City of Houston is issuing this RFI to assist the City in finding a cooperative solution in expanding digital connectivity and digital equity in select City of Houston areas. The Complete Communities of Kashmere Gardens, Gulfton, and Acres Home, and municipal parks within these areas, shall serve as the initial target communities. The information the City will receive as a result of this RFI will help the City determine the needs of the target Complete Communities prior to expanding to additional Houston communities and municipal parks.

NIGP Code: 838-29; 838-83; 838-96; 925-17; 925-70; 938-31; 939-72; 940-85

DocuSigned by:

Jerry Adams

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Jerry Adams, Chief Procurement Officer

12/16/2021

Date

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1.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

The City of Houston is issuing a Request for Information (RFI) seeking responses (individually, an "RFI Response" and collectively, "RFI Responses") from qualified organizations ("Proposers") interested in assisting the City in deploying a Digital Equity Services Project ("Project") in select Houston areas. These areas represent neighborhoods that have been historically underserved with regards to affordable broadband and digital connectivity opportunities within homes and public areas. Coverage within the target Complete Community areas, including municipal parks in those areas, must be achieved for any consideration of coverage or trade value asset use outside of the target Complete Communities.

For terminology reference, digital equity is a circumstance where all individuals and communities have the equal and complete capacity in information technology to fully participate in society, the economy, and government, to successfully satisfy their needs and goals for learning, employment, culture, essential services, and other key activities in life. Digital equity cannot be achieved without addressing and bridging the digital divide where not all persons have equal access to digital information technology (digital connectivity) and broadband internet capability, whether due to economics, equipment, and/or skills.

For the purposes of this RFI, 'digital connectivity' is defined as the means and methods for persons to be able to connect objects, systems, and applications to the internet and other local networks for the purposes of communication, learning, research, business, and operational management. The goal of digital equity is for individuals and communities to have the information technology capacity for full inclusion in activities such as civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services. *The City's RFI is seeking information from Proposers that details how their services can help the City meet its goal of increasing digital equity for unserved and/or underserved Houstonians.*

2.0 GENERAL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The City of Houston is issuing this RFI to assist the City in finding a cooperative solution in expanding digital connectivity and digital equity in select City of Houston areas. The Complete Communities of Kashmere Gardens, Gulfton, and Acres Home, and the municipal parks within these areas, shall serve as the initial target Complete Communities. The information the City will receive as a result of this RFI will help the City determine the needs of the target Complete Communities prior to expanding to additional Houston communities and municipal parks.

The ultimate objective is to create a design and implementation solution, in conjunction with the City of Houston's in-progress Digital Equity Master Plan, to



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meet the current and future technological needs for increased digital equity for **all** Houston communities, as well as expand capabilities for patron amenities in municipal parks, City of Houston departmental operational support, and Houston area emergency response capabilities.

Information on available City of Houston asset locations and coverage areas is included within the following:

- **Attachment #1 (Available RFI Assets)** - The Available Assets provided for this RFI include:
 - **Type 1 Assets (Target Community Assets)** – Assets located within the boundaries of the selected target Complete Communities where broadband coverage is desired and are available for digital equity project equipment and coverage for public/City use as well as potential Proposer trade value (as defined in Type 2 Assets below).
 - **Type 2 Assets (Adjacent Trade Assets)** – Assets available for potential Proposer trade value only and are located within ½ mile outside of the target Complete Community boundaries where local coverage and equipment is NOT desired; however, these City assets may have trade value for Proposers in a low-cost partnership under this project for Proposer -desired equipment mounting, infrastructure right of way, or other interests which can be considered and discussed. These assets may be expanded with additional City or third-party assets such as light poles, streetlights, public works facilities or other assets of interest based on the results of this RFI.
 - **Type 3 Assets (Citywide Trade/Coverage Assets)** – Assets available citywide both for potential Proposer trade value as well as desired City of Houston digital connectivity coverage locations where coverage or Proposer activities may be permitted in a secondary focus for digital connectivity/equity if target community digital equity coverage is already being met.
 - **Additional Non-Listed Assets of Interest** - *Light poles, streetlights, public works facilities, other City of Houston facilities (police stations, fire stations, libraries, etc.), or other assets/infrastructure that **may** be available for project considerations (whether within a target Complete Community or citywide). As the project and RFI progress, RFI Assets of Interest will be refined as well as defined as type 1/2/3 assets based on their location within or outside of target Complete Community and municipal park boundaries and City/Proposer interest. As this is an RFI exploring options, other City assets which are of interest to the Proposer may also be recommended for discussion by either party.*



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- **Attachment #2 (RFI Types 1 & 2 Asset Maps)** – Graphical maps/depictions from the City's GIS system of the general locations of the target Complete Community areas with Type 1 & Type 2 Assets identified.
- It is also understood that Proposers may not have an interest in providing digital connectivity in all Type 1 locations within Attachment #1 or that a Proposers recommended cooperative solutions may vary in methodology, size, capability, and cost from location to location within a target Complete Community or between target Complete Communities or facility types. ***It should be noted, however, that the City strongly desires all Type 1 Asset locations within municipal parks to result in added digital connectivity capabilities under the Project.***

3.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

While the key City objective for the Project is to initially provide increased digital connectivity and equity within the target Complete Communities and associated municipal parks, there are some specific considerations and priorities to implementing the City's desired solution:

- Provide reliable connectivity as an enhanced amenity in and around City assets.
- Provide reliable connectivity as an enhanced service for residents living in the target Complete Communities, the general public, and patrons of municipal parks.
- Improve digital inclusion and digital equity ultimately across the City of Houston and within all communities.
- Improve digital connectivity in the City of Houston for emergency response functions.
- Enhance City operational efficiency through technology and partnerships.
- Create opportunities for future revenue generation and operational cost offset.
- Proposer shall provide information on creative solutions on a location-by-location basis that allow digital connectivity for community members indoors and outdoors at minimum connection speeds of at least 100 Mbps download (100 Mbps preferred) and 100 Mbps upload.

4.0 PROJECT COOPERATIVE SOLUTION INTENT

To achieve a 'best value' digital connectivity/equity services solution for the City in the foreseeable future, the City desires to explore creative options and alternatives via this RFI process that allows for the Project objectives to be achieved. The City envisions Project success as measured in not only an efficient and maintainable



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solution able to meet and adapt to ever-changing connectivity technology, but also in a solution that is cost-effective or no-cost to the City in the long-term. As such, the Proposer shall provide information that describes potential cooperative solutions between the City and the Proposer.

Cooperative consideration concepts that may be entertained by the City include, but are not limited to, Proposer-owned and/or maintained equipment, community/public service initiatives or programs, connectivity services provided in lieu of marketing benefits, and/or allowance for Proposer equipment/infrastructure on City property, etc. In the interest of this cooperative solution, both Type 1 Target Community Assets (locations the City desires added Digital Connectivity/Equity Services to be provided) and Types 2 & 3 Adjacent Trade and Citywide Trade/Coverage Assets (Proposer trade locations and/or locations of secondary interest to the City for Digital Connectivity coverage) have been included within Attachments #1 and #2 for Proposer consideration.

5.0 TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- The proposed solution must be compatible with the broadband requirements found in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (i.e., reliability, and latency).
- Minimum connection speeds of at least 100Mbps download and 100 Mbps upload is preferred where services are being provided for a city-benefit in a Target Complete Community or municipal park.
- The proposed solution should be scaled to the size/class/type of facility for which coverage is intended.
- The overall means/methods and level of service provided should be consistent across similar size/function facilities.
- The proposed system should be scalable and able to support additional capacity, users, and functions as needs/use changes.
- The system/equipment should be easily upgradable to provide enhanced services as technology evolves.
- Equipment, devices, structures, and right of way/real estate use within municipal parks must have a park purpose or benefit to park patrons. This can include, but is not limited to, park user connectivity for communication, improved park/amenity capabilities/maintenance, and park user improved safety.
- Equipment, devices, structures, and right of way/real estate use throughout the City must have a purpose or benefit (directly or in trade) to residents of the target Complete Community, the general public, or patrons of municipal parks.
 - Equipment provided shall be appropriate for the location (indoor/outdoor, weather/conditions) where it is installed and shall be installed in compliance with all applicable codes and regulations.



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- Equipment should be protected against power surges, electrical spikes, and lightning. Additionally, means for battery and/or solar backup for key equipment should be considered.
- Any equipment installed within accessible or unsecured areas shall be appropriately protected from vandalism and tampering.
- The system/equipment should have means/methods to prevent inappropriate or unauthorized use, including cybersecurity considerations.
- The system/equipment should be easily maintainable with individual parts being swappable to quickly correct functionality problems and for ease of maintenance.

In addition to the above, the Proposer should also consider presenting/discussing a means/method that the impact of the digital equity/connectivity services provided under this Project could be measured for success in achieving the Project's objectives (surveys, usage reports, coverage comparison maps, etc.).

6.0 SOLUTION ASSUMPTIONS

The Proposer may assume the following when generating their RFI Response and submission:

- The City expects that for cost-effective and efficient operation/coverage, equipment may need to be mounted on existing City facility/structure rooftops, poles, walls, awnings, or other available surfaces.
- Existing power or other communication infrastructure within the target Complete Communities, municipal parks, and other City areas may be available for use as part of a cooperative solution but must be identified within the technical solution with regards to the planned extent and/or cost offset or impact.
- Aesthetics and safety should be considered when providing equipment within publicly accessible or visible areas, particularly in municipal parks, and where adjacent residences and commercial structures are present. Permissibility of large structures in certain locations may be subject to community and adjacent stakeholder approval.



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7.0 SUBMISSION OF RESPONSES

- 7.1 A response must be received no later than 5:00 PM CT on January 31, 2022. The City reserves the right to cancel, amend or extend the deadline for the RFI at its sole discretion. If a Proposer needs an extension, the Proposer must contact the City's Strategic Procurement Division no later than January 14, 2022, by 5:00 PM CT.
- 7.2 This RFI does not commit the City to award a contract. The City reserves the right to reject any or all responses, waive technicalities or irregularities, and accept any response it deems to be in the best interest of the City. The City shall not be liable for any costs incurred by any company responding to this RFI.
- 7.3 All information submitted to the City is subject to the provisions of the Texas Public Information Act (TPIA), located in Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code. Proposers may mark any information submitted, including their financial information, as confidential, trade secret, proprietary, or any other designation of choice. The City will notify any Proposer should their information be requested under the TPIA and proposers will have an opportunity to assert their own arguments to the Texas Attorney General as to why their information should be excepted from public disclosure.
- 7.4 This RFI always remains the property of the City and must be returned by the Proposer upon request.
- 7.5 Please submit two (2) electronic thumb drives to:

City of Houston, Strategic Procurement Division
Ruby Lopez, Sr. Procurement Specialist
Regarding: DIGITAL EQUITY SERVICES
RFI No. P03-Q31129
611 Walker Street, 5th Floor
Houston, TX 77002-4903

- 7.6 The City desires to minimize the submission of unnecessary RFI material. All costs directly or indirectly related to the preparation of a response to this RFI shall be the sole responsibility of and shall be borne by the contractor or individual responding.



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8.0 PROCESS

- 8.1 The Office of Innovation, Houston Information Technology Services, Houston Parks and Recreation Department, and the City's consultant (Digital Equity Workgroup) will review the submissions to this RFI to determine the types of master plans available to the City of Houston and the responding firms' capabilities. The Digital Equity Workgroup may require a presentation and will notify Proposers if presentations are deemed necessary. Proposers are responsible for monitoring the City of Houston's website for additional information pertaining to this RFI.
- 8.2 By issuing this RFI, the City of Houston has not committed itself to enter into a contract with any firm for any or all of the services for which information is sought under this RFI. Please be advised that the information received may be utilized in a forthcoming Request for Proposals ("RFP"). The basis for the development of an RFP may be derived in whole or in part from the information received through this RFI process. The City of Houston will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in responding to this RFI or in making a presentation if required; all said costs are solely the respondent's expense.
- 8.3 The City of Houston reserves the right to cancel, amend, or extend the deadline for responding to this RFI at its sole discretion.

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